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As Colby leaves CIA, a warning on Russians

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WASHINGTON—It was William E. Colby's last day as director of the Central Intelligence Agency.

Over on Capital Hill, the Senate was confirming George Bush as Colby's successor. Within a few hours, Colby would pack up his things and move out after 30 years of serving his country in the intelligence business.

Outside his office, the world was cold and uninviting. A winter rain drenched the naked trees groaning in the face of repeated assaults by an icy wind sweeping through the grounds of CIA headquarters near Langley, Va.

ON A WINDOW LEDGE, a pigeon protectively draped wet feathers over a brace of hatching eggs tucked in a nest against the sill. With a rush of wings, the father pigeon settled beside her with tiny bits of food to sustain her vigil.

And William Colby, professional super-spy, master of a vast network of intelligence operatives since 1973, and outgoing occupant of an office where many an espionage plot was hatched, looked out at the expectant mother and remarked proudly:

"I've watched at least three families born out there since taking this job and the tenderness of those little creatures never ceases to move me."

THEN HE TURNED from the continuing miracle of life outside the window to speak of the harsh realities of human life in a world where pugnacious political philosophies leave little room for tenderness.

"The Soviets are pushing us and they intend to keep pushing us," Colby said.

"We're faced with the Soviets obviously thinking that we are in a period of withdrawal after Viet Nam and that we won't assist our friends around the world."

"So they're pushing, both themselves and through their Cuban clients, with 40 large aircraft about the size of C-141 transports shuttling between the Caribbean and Angola."

"THERE HAVE BEEN sea shipments from the USSR and Eastern Europe of tanks, artillery, rockets, small arms. There are 400 Soviet advisers in Angola. At least 10,000 Cubans are carrying the



Bob Wiedrich

bulk of the fighting there with senior Cuban army officers.

"Even the Soviet navy is involved with a destroyer, an LST, and an oiler offshore. The destroyer withdrew recently. But now a Soviet cruiser is on the way."

"That's the Soviet Union pushing. They think the Americans aren't going to resist their presence or help their friends to resist. So why should the Soviets back off?"

"I'm reminded of the 1930s, when Manchuria and the Japanese and Ethiopia and the Italians were too far away for us to be worried. Then it was the Germans in Spain. None of that bothered us until it was too late."

"If the Soviets can do it in Angola today, why not anywhere? Why not elsewhere in Africa or in Latin America? Or wherever opportunity arises?"

COLBY DEFENDED the American policy of diplomatic, economic, military, and intelligence aid to friendly nations, which he said helped contain communism after World War II.

"After the war, Western Europe faced three threats," he said. "We countered the military threat with NATO and the economic problems with the Marshall Plan. Subversion we met with CIA help to democratic governments. And it worked."

"Later, in Latin America, we feared the sweep of Castro's communism and Che Guevara. We overcame that with political programs through the Organization of American States, economic assistance, military aid to groups fighting insurgency, and the help of CIA intelligence."

"Latin America did not follow Castro. So we won that, too."

"THE CIA CAN help America's friends without involving Americans. No American soldiers go on CIA operations. The Americans merely supply and advise. And very few of them do that, generally."

"In Laos, for example, the CIA was asked to help by our government in 1963. We did so for 10 years. We never had more than two or three hundred men there. The battle lasted a decade."

"During that time, the North Vietnamese increased their forces from 7,000 to 70,000. Yet, the battle lines at the end were the same as in the beginning. And a relative handful of our men accomplished that, helping the Laotians fight off a foreign communist invasion of their homeland."

"People called that a secret war. But four committees of Congress knew about it. And the Laotians fought it, not Americans."

"I'm proud of what we have done. We made our mistakes. We also had our victories. American will need more such victories in the future. For the Soviets will continue to push."